

Name of Practice: VOLUNTARY COVER CROP (may be harvested)
DCR Specifications for No. VSL-8D

This document specifies terms and conditions for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's voluntary small grain cover crop for nutrient management and residue management best management practice, that are applicable to all contracts, entered into with respect to that practice.

A. Description and Purpose

This practice is to document and establish vegetative cover on cropland for protection from erosion and the reduction of nutrient losses to groundwater. Harvesting for hay, haylage, silage, grain, or seed is permitted after March 14. Early and standard planting dates are allowed.

This practice provides a cover on cropland, which will help prevent the loss of nutrients. The purpose is to reduce erosion and the leaching of nutrients to ground water. This BMP is designed to utilize the maximum amount of residual nitrogen from previous surface nutrient applications and in the first three feet of the soil profile.

B. Policies and Specifications

1. No nutrients from any sources are allowed between the harvesting of the previous crop and March 1 of the next calendar year. No nutrients are allowed at planting.
2. A good stand and good growth of winter cover must be obtained in sufficient time to protect the area in the fall and winter. (Ongoing research in Virginia's coastal plain indicates that a cereal grain crop with 30 plants per square foot of field planted with two tillers per plant (60 tillers per sq. ft.) by December 1, provides the optimum biomass for scavenging excess nitrogen while protecting the soil from erosion)
3. All seed must be free of prohibited noxious weed seed, have a minimum germination rate of 80% and have no more than 16 restricted noxious weed seeds per pound. If the grower elects to use home grown seed, it must be tested for purity, germination and noxious weeds prior to seeding by a recognized seed laboratory.
4. The practice is intended to keep a vegetative cover on cropland, which will help prevent the loss of nutrients, by reducing surface erosion and absorbing any excess nutrients from the soil. Current research indicates that early planting of winter rye maximizes the cover crops environmental benefit in Virginia.
5. Harvesting for hay, haylage, silage, grain, or seed is permitted after March 14. Pasturing consistent with sound agronomic management is permitted as long as 60% cover is maintained through March 14.

6. Select one of following species and/or mixtures of species to plant in all soils:
 - i. Rye (Tetraploid)..... 2 bu./acre
 - ii Winter Rye (not tetraploid) 2 bu./acre
 - iii. Winter Barley..... 2 bu./acre
 - iv. Winter Hardy Oats 2 bu./acre
 - v. Winter Wheat or Triticale 2 bu./acre
 - vi. Winter Annual ryegrass 20 lbs./acre
 - vii. Small grain mixtures 1 bu./acre with
 - a) legume[†] 10 lbs./acre or,
 - b) Diakon (forage or tillage) radish..... 6 lb./ acre or,
 - c) canola or rape 4 lbs./acre
 - viii. Diakon (forage or tillage) radish..... 6-8 lbs./acre[°]
 - mixture with annual rye grass 10 lbs./acre
 - ix. Winter-hardy *Brassica* (canola/rape) 5 -7 lbs./acre[°]
 - mixture with annual rye grass 10 lbs./acre

[†] - legume = Crimson Clover, Austrian Winter Pea or Hairy Vetch

[°]Use higher seeding rates for pure stands and lower seeding rates for mixed species plantings

Higher seeding rates are recommended for aerial seeding.

7. Seeding of all seed types must be planted by the dates listed below:

	Early <u>Planting date</u>	Standard <u>Planting date</u>
i. Cities of Chesapeake & VA Beach.....	November 10	November 30
ii. Coastal Plain.....	October 25	November 15
iii. Piedmont.....	October 10	November 1
iv. Mountain and Valley.....	October 5	October 25

8. In all cases, this practice is subject to NRCS standard 340.
9. Soil loss rates must be computed for all applications.
10. The practice must not be in lifespan from any other conservation program.

C. Technical Responsibility

Technical and administrative responsibility is assigned to qualified technical DCR and SWCD staff in consultation, where appropriate and based on the controlling standard, with DCR, Virginia Certified Nutrient Management Planner(s), NRCS, DOF, and VCE . Individuals certifying technical need and technical practice installation shall have appropriate certifications as identified above, and/or Engineering Job Approval Authority (EJAA), for the designed and installed component(s). All practices are subject to spot check procedures and any other quality control measures.

Revised March, 2016